



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Natalie B. Billing, Representatives Karin Adams, Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Laurie Kim Briggs, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Warren T. Cooper, Nancy S. Driscoll, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Melissa M. Finlayson, Irene B. Garagliano, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Wendy L. Hellekson, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, James Loughlin, Lisa M. Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Richard Metayer, Betsy Moukawsher, Scott Newsome, Deborah Peruzzotti, Kevin Power, Betty A. Prochaska, Don Pratt, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Cheryl Tilney and Robert A. Warn

Wednesday, April 15, 2009

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-CR1

Regular Meeting

A. ROLL CALL

Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:31p.m.

28 members were present, and a quorum was declared.

The Moderator reported that Reps. Beckwith, Cerf and Luck called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.

Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Cooper, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steinfeld and Rep. Streeter

Members Absent: Rep. Adams, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Finlayson, Rep. Hellekson, Rep. Luck, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Steere, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Tilney and Rep. Warn

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, School Superintendent Paul Kadri, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 18, 2009

A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Moukawsher, seconded by Rep. Peruzzotti.

Rep. Sebastian requested that the minutes reflect the investment figures and percentages concerning Town investments that the Town Manager mentioned on page 2 under "Report of the Town Manager".

The motion to adopt the minutes as amended carried 24 in favor, 4 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Fairbank, Power, Prochaska and Smuts.)

D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

None.

E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Billing reminded members that the budget books are available at the Town Clerk's office and that copies of the new charter are available at this meeting. She noted that a memo concerning the Town Charter changes in terms of office was sent out on March 27, 2009. She confirmed that the current elected officials will serve until November 30, 2009 and that the next term of office start on December 1, 2009.

The Moderator stated that, after consultation with the floor leaders, she is announcing the following changes in committee assignments. Rep. Finlayson is removed from the RTM Education Committee and Rep. Steere is removed from RTM Education and Public Works Committees and that both are assigned to Rules and Procedures.

F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2008 is approximately \$11.0 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000. The Manager noted that at the April 14, 2009 meeting of the Town Council Committee of the Whole, they acted on fourth quarter transfers in the amount of \$314,475. This item should be approved by the Council on Tuesday, April 21, 2009 and then referred to the RTM. The Capital Reserve balance is \$1,779,119.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted the following information provided in the Town Manager's News: the 2009 Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day Schedule, Fort Hill Homes Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Report, the Senior Center Progress Report and the School Construction Project Status report.

The Manager announced that this year the Arbor Day celebration will be held at Claude Chester School on April 23, 2009 and the "Topping Out" celebration for the Senior Center project is scheduled for May 7, 2009. He mentioned that the Groton Community Garden location was chosen and is at the rear of the Human Services building on Fort Hill Road.

In response to Rep. Evered, the Town Manager explained the process for disposal of the new energy efficient florescent light bulbs at the transfer station and the significance of the "Topping Out" celebration.

G. LIAISON REPORTS

No reports.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. FINANCE

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Granatosky

No meeting, no report.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Peruzzotti

No meeting, no report.

3. EDUCATION

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Fairbank

No meeting, no report.

4. RECREATION

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Power

No meeting, no report.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt

No meeting, no report.

6. PUBLIC WORKS

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Collins

No meeting, no report.

7. RULES & PROCEDURES

a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Evered

No meeting, no report.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

FY 2010 Budget Discussion

Moderator Billing stated that School Superintendent Paul Kadri is planning to attend the RTM meetings on a routine basis. She noted that neither the Manager or Mr. Kadri are giving presentations this evening but will answer questions from the members.

In response to Rep. Newsome, the Manager explained Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM) figures which represent 2007 percentages of how Groton compares and ranks with the 169 towns in the State in regard to taxes, fund balance and education expenditures.

In response to the Moderator, the Manager elaborated on the recent State Appropriations budget announcement and the Governor's proposed budget. He stated that he uses the Governor's proposed budget which is available in early March to formulate the Manager's proposed budget. He feels that the worst case scenario would be that Groton would receive \$1.2 million less than the current year. He believes that the Governor and legislature are trying their best in the current economic situation not to slash the aid to municipalities. He announced that Groton received notification that it would receive a total of \$5 million in Federal Impact Aid for the current fiscal year.

In response to Rep. Fairbank, Mr. Kadri explained the difference between Federal Impact Aid and the stimulus recovery money. He noted his concern about the stimulus recovery money which is a limited financial plan for flat funding to assist municipalities in terms of maintaining employment. He is attempting now to find a way to sustain the \$3 million contribution in future budgets after the stimulus recovery money is discontinued.

In response to the Moderator, Mr. Kadri explained the complexities of the ECS grant. Some of the money contained in the grant is limited to two years, has very specific prescribed uses and is audited. He expressed his concern about acceptance of the grant because new revenue would have to be found to sustain the uses in future budgets.

In response to Rep. Evered, Mr. Kadri explained that the District Reference Groups (DRG) compare towns and help to establish State and Federal funding and regulations of student and language needs in a given DRG group.

Rep. Smuts explained for the viewing public that Federal Impact Aid is the money received in lieu of taxes for the education of Navy dependents living in our community.

Moderator Billing noted that a chart in the Education Budget book shows historic cumulative growth in Education budgets versus other towns in the DRG, but believes that Rep. Evered is requesting current budget information within the DRG. Mr. Kadri stated that information is changing each day as all towns within the DRG are in the budget process.

Rep. Sebastian addressed his fellow RTM members with his concerns regarding the RTM budget process. He feels the RTM should decide where they want to be at the end of the budget process. His comments are based on his four years as an RTM member and he feels that most accounts are approved with little objection from members. He believes that the Town has "good salesmen" selling the budget and that committees are "worn down" by staff. He summarized that the RTM needs to track the changes as they are made in each category so that they know where they are going to be when they walk out of the last budget meeting. He mentioned that he believes the Town

Manager's proposed budget should be reduced by about two percent and that the Board of Education should be held to the current year's funding level. He stated that with residents continuing to lose jobs the RTM must do something different.

Rep. Massett stated she understands what Rep. Sebastian is saying; however she cautions the members that everyone is faced with the same tough economic times. She knows that this budget must be reviewed in minute detail. However, she feels that the RTM cannot cut for the sake of cutting and believes that there are implications for each reduction approved by the RTM. She strongly recommended that any and all reductions be made judiciously.

Rep. Garagliano left prior to the caucus.

Republican Floor Leader Kevin Power requested a caucus at 8:15. The meeting resumed at 8:23 p.m.

Rep. Power reported for the record that at the District 7 caucus to elect a replacement for Rep. Bartinik the candidate proposed by the Republican Town Committee was not elected.

The Moderator announced that District 1 elected Karin Adams to replace Rep. Bergeson and District 7 elected Robert A. Warn to replace Rep. Bartinik.

Rep. Loughlin informed the members that Mystic-Noank Library is used about equally by Groton and Stonington residents.

The Moderator clarified this issue by commenting that the budget request from the Mystic-Noank Library is \$206,000 for Groton and \$75,000 from Stonington. She stated that Stonington has proposed to reduce their funding to \$65,000. She feels that there is concern about the imbalance of contributions made by Groton and Stonington since the usage of the library is fairly equal.

In response to Rep. Ebbin, the Town Manager stated that he believes the RTM has no authority over the CIP City Highway request but does have authority over the Groton Long Point CIP paving account. He acknowledged that there is an existing Town Attorney opinion on this subject that he will reissue. His feeling is that the RTM does not have to vote on the account.

The Moderator interjected that her recollection is that the Town Attorney opinion recommends that the RTM vote on the account since it is a "past practice". She clarified that the Town Manager is saying that the RTM does not have the statutory authority to reduce the City's highway request, even though the Town is moving the paving money to a CIP account. She noted that there is not the same statutory situation in regard to Groton Long Point's request.

Rep. Collins reported that many Stonington residents are unaware that the Town of Stonington is not supporting the Mystic-Noank Library's request for funding. He noted that he thought usage was 60% from Groton and 40% from Stonington. He suggested that some type of communication to publicize the lack of funding from Stonington may be beneficial.

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:32 p.m. was made by Rep. Garcia, was seconded and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk